

City of Socorro

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Socorro: the state of the City *a report from Mayor Ravi Bhasker*



Mayor Ravi Bhasker

For an annual look at the progress the City of Socorro has made in the past year, Mayor Ravi Bhasker has summarized a few of the highlights.

Administration & Finance:

With the leadership of Finance Director Mable Gonzales, the City continues to stay solvent without any cutback in

services. The budget committee, under Councilor Donald Monette, has been able to keep city services and capital projects funded at consistent levels. We are funding and implementing a new project which will keep the public informed by phone or email of news of particular interest to each individual (see the April newsletter for more information at www.socorronm.gov).

Fire & Ambulance: The City continues to serve the whole county with our ambulance service. We also provide ground transfers from Socorro General Hospital to hospitals in Albuquerque. Additionally the City negotiated an airport lease with PHI, the helicopter ambulance service, for patients who need critical

transport. Ambulances are currently scheduled to be replaced every three years at a cost of over \$190,000 per vehicle which can more easily be accomplished if cost sharing agreements with other agencies are in place. Fire fighting continues to be in the competent hands of Fire Chief Joe Gonzales and our firefighters.

Library: With Director Paula Mertz the library continues to modernize and join the electronic age. The computers which are available to the patrons are in constant use. There are E-books now available. Paula has also instituted classes for those of us not yet computer literate. The cozy reading areas, a great children's space, and upstairs meeting areas are continually in use. Thanks to the Library Board's continuous contributions, both monetary and in volunteer time, our facility is the friendly local library it has always been. The summer reading program for the children and the Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) program are among the most successful in the state.

Parks: Projects to expand our park facilities will take a large step forward in one year. Parks Director Lloyd Martinez and Crew Leader Chick Griego are spearheading the development of the soccer and rodeo facility. Representative Tripp and Senator Morales have been instrumental in acquiring funds from the

Employee Anniversaries

Barbara Scarborough	20 years
Michael Lucero	5 years

City Council

Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez	Nick Fleming
Gordy Hicks	Toby Jaramillo
Donald Monette	Michael Olguin, Jr.
Ernest Pargas, Jr.	Peter D. Romero
Ravi Bhasker, Mayor	Pat Salome, Clerk

state for this project, which should be completed in the next year or so. Meanwhile Sedillo Park and the Riverine Parks continue to see heavy traffic. The Plaza has never looked better. The Farmers Market continues to use it twice a week during the growing season and it is home to numerous city events.

Police: The big news is the initiation of the Police Oversight Commission (POC). With the leadership of Councilor Mary Ann Chavez-Lopez and City Clerk Pat Salome, the POC is now operational under civilian oversight and ready to handle your concerns (contact City Clerk Pat Salome for more information). With consent of the local school district we have created a police presence in our schools, albeit not on a full time basis.

Recreation: With the hiring of full time recreation director Josh Kerns and the relationship with the School District, the City has multiple new youth and adult programs. The workout facility in Finley Gym is newly upgraded and open for public use. Tackle and flag football, cheerleading, men's and women's basketball, and softball tournaments have had a quick resurgence. The soccer and rodeo facility and walking paths are being developed on Highway 60 near the National Guard Armory.

Streets: We continue resurfacing streets, most recently J.O. Gallegos Road. Work orders for clean up also continue. A new shooting range has been developed by the street department with help from the Bureau of Land Management for Police Firearms Certification.

Tourism and Heritage Center: After Deborah Dean did a fantastic job in developing our tourism department, Jennifer Gonzales has continued to carry the department forward. With Socorrofest, Cinco de Mayo, and many other local events every weekend of the year the city is alive with activity! Advertising Socorro has also taken off in the Visit Socorro social media site. Stop in the Heritage Center to see the wonderful display of historic Socorro.

Transportation

We continue giving daily service to and from Magdalena and to and from the Belen Railrunner station, and a new and meaningful service to the dialysis unit in Los Lunas three times a week. The local bus routes serve many in the community who would be home bound otherwise.

The new transportation department headquarters is in the historic old Socorro City Hall at 201 Church.

Utilities: With USDA monies and moderate changes in utility rates, we have new sewer systems for areas of the city that were previously without. We are still working on funding sewer improvements for the Evergreen area. The days of brown water have gone with the construction of a new well. With the completion of the \$4.5 million project (75% grant funds) naturally occurring arsenic is being removed at the national threshold level.

Gas lines have been modernized. The City has successfully convinced one of our biggest employers, Dicaperl, to purchase natural gas from the City rather than oil. This new arrangement will be economically beneficial to both parties. The sewer plant is in the process of rehabilitation after the problems caused by the freezes of 2011. The City has many natural gas vehicles and a fast-fill natural gas station to minimize gasoline usage (costs).

The longest project in the City's history is now concluded. The landfill is now certified for use. We are working with Catron and Sierra counties and Elephant Butte to accept their refuse, thereby reducing the need to generate funds locally.

Youth Center: Cindy Rivera continues offering the after school program throughout the school year. The summer program is also offered at the youth center. The facility is also approved to be used as a shelter during bad weather. It has been home to as many as a hundred stranded travelers.

Miscellaneous

- We continue to house Representative Pearce's office in City Hall to make his staff accessible to the public.
- The City also continues to hold hours for Veterans Affairs staff.
- We are finally in the last of a long process in repairing a levee to protect farm land between the diversion ditches with the help of the MRGCD and Conservancy Board Member Chris Sichler.
- With the certification of the western levee the remainder of the City may be certified out of the floodplain by FEMA. This will free us from having to purchase flood insurance.